(c) whether despite Government achieving the enrolment targets for formal elementary education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the retention rate has been low; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) According to the survey, out of 134.6 lakh children in the age group of 6-13 years who are out of school, 47.5 lakh children (35.3%) belong to SC/ST communities.

(c) As per National Education Statistics for 2003-04 the retention rate for both boys and girls in the age group of 6-13 years is approximately 69%.

(d) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) seeks universalisation of elementary education as well as universal retention by 2010. SSA provides for several varieties of interventions like incentives, focus on girls and weaker sections of society and to improve quality of education in schools to retain more children in schools. The Mid-day Meal Programme is an important factor for the purpose, also.

Resources for higher education

140. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have requested Planning Commission for more resources to fund higher education;

(b) if so, the details of the proposed expenditure in this regard; and

(c) the total amount being sought and the status of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (c) Allocation of plan resources for higher education by the Planning Commission is subject to availability of financial resources and approval of the Budgetary provisions by Parliament. The approved size of the 10th Plan for higher education was Rs. 4176.50 crores. During the years

2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05, an expenditure of Rs. 619.14 crore, Rs. 560.44 crore and Rs. 789.95 crore have been incurred respectively. During 2005-06, Rs. 873.27 crore has been approved at RE stage.

Courses being run by IGNOU

141. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of enrolments in various courses of IGNOU in the last three years;

(b) the details of the new courses introduced by the IGNOU during this period;

(c) whether it is a fact that the Study Centres of the IGNOU do not provide regular and quality facilities to the students;

(d) the steps being taken to improve the quality of Study Centres; and

(e) whether Government are considering ranking the academic infrastructure and performance of the study circles?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) and (b) According to the information furnished by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) enrollment in various courses of IGNOU during the last three years has been 3,34,415 during 2003-04, 3,66,161 during 2004-05 and 4,29,542 during 2005-06 respectively. The University launched 36 new programmes during the period.

(c) to (e) Depending on local needs, Study Centres of IGNOU provide regular and quality services to the students on the weekend through Qualified Co-ordinators and experienced Academics. Selection of Counsellors is made from a panel of qualified teachers. The functioning of the Study Centres is also monitored regularly by the Regional Centres The University has equipped Study Centres with library facilities, audio-video facilities, as also video and teleconferencing facilities in select places.